



Are you a UV tanner? From a landmark study confirming that exposure to ultraviolet (UV) light (radiation from the sun or tanning machines) is the most common cause of melanoma to the proposed tax on the use of indoor tanning beds, there are a host of reasons to give up tanning. We hope you'll keep them in mind in the new year.

1. Studies Link UV Radiation to the Deadliest Form of Skin Cancer

Scientists have analyzed the genome (the complete DNA information) for melanoma, and, according to a definitive new study from The Wellcome Trust Sanger Institute, in Hinxton, England, the vast majority of mutations found in this potentially deadly disease are caused by ultraviolet radiation. For the first time, researchers have identified thousands of mutations that occur in melanoma genes. Above all, these mutations are caused by damage to the skin cells' DNA by UV radiation. According to the Institute, "The melanoma genome contains more than 33,000 mutations, many of which bear the imprint of the most common cause of melanoma — exposure to ultraviolet light."

Additionally, in July the World Health Organization's International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) added radiation from UV-emitting tanning machines to its list of the most dangerous forms of cancer-causing radiation — a list that includes the radioactive element plutonium as well as solar UV. Studies show that first exposure to tanning beds in youth increases melanoma risk by 75 percent.

2. Tanning Beds Increase the Risk of Nonmelanoma Skin Cancers, Too

Tanning bed users have 2.5 times the risk of squamous cell carcinoma and 1.5 times the risk of basal cell carcinoma. These nonmelanoma skin cancers (NMSC) are the two most common skin cancers, and both can be highly disfiguring if not caught and treated in a timely manner. Basal cell carcinoma (BCC), the most common form of skin cancer, affects over a million Americans annually. Squamous cell carcinoma (SCC) can metastasize if not caught early; approximately 2,500 people in the US die every year from SCC. People with a history of NMSC face twice the risk of developing other malignancies, like lung, colon, and breast cancer.

3. UV Exposure Causes Skin Aging

Up to 90 percent of the visible changes commonly attributed to aging are caused by UV exposure. The cellular damage to the skin's DNA caused by UV radiation is cumulative and leads to fine wrinkles, deep grooves, blotchiness, sagging, and a leathery texture. People who accumulate a lot of UV exposure in their childhood and teen years may see signs of damage as early as in their twenties.

4. Tanning is Not Fashionable

Celebrities, models, and fashion insiders all know that tanning is no longer in style. Actors including Kristen Stewart, Amy Adams, Rachel Weisz, and Nicole Kidman are proud to be pale; they wouldn't alter their natural beauty — or risk damaging their skin — by tanning. Sarah Brown, *Vogue's* Beauty Director, says it best: "A healthy glow does not mean a tan. A healthy glow means your natural skin tone, glowing." Jane Larkworthy, Beauty Director of *W*

, adds, "I can't remember the last time I saw a tanned model in my magazine or on the runway. Skin that is not tan is gorgeous." This is a trend you'd be smart to follow!

5. Indoor Tanning May be Taxed

The US Senate's approval of a 10 percent excise tax on the use of indoor tanning beds as part of the new healthcare reform bill (H.R. 3590) is an important step forward in the fight against skin cancer. This proposed tax, similar to the "sin tax" on cigarettes, would not only raise billions for health care, but would also give people another excellent reason to stay away from tanning salons. Protect your skin, and your wallet, by steering clear of tanning salons.